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Interfaith Dialogue Takes Wing
Case Study of India

Al-Andalus
Golden Age of
Coexistence

Dr. Turki Warns of Israeli Danger In Al-Quds

Globalization and Religion

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What Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz had initiated in the name of inter-faith dialogue is taking roots elsewhere in the world more importantly in India. *Abdul Aziz V. K.*, who is himself an interfaith dialogue activist, and is currently based in Jeddah, has given a case study of India in terms of the influence of Interfaith. The King's efforts have inspired people like this activist to focusing his activities in positive dialogue to establish a healthy and harmonious coexistence within Muslim organizations and the diverse religions globally to restore the ethical and moral values in humankind.

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Muslim appreciation of other cultures did not mean a withdrawal from the Islamic ideology or Muslim legacy nor a surrender to others' culture and mythology. *Dr. Obaidullah Fahad* takes a full consideration of others' contributions in the Islamic paradigm. They interacted with others with full confidence and unshakable faith in Islamic worldview. Now Muslims are required by the very nature of their legacy to interact with all the forms of others. That is the crux of the interfaith dialogue that reflects Islam's global nature.

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The Muslim World League Journal
P.O. Box: 537
Makkah, Saudi Arabia
Tel/ Fax: 00966 (2) 5600923
E-mail:
mwljournal@themwl.org

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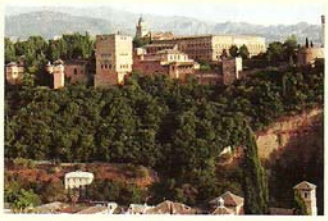

In terms of interfaith dialogue, Spain stands out as the most glaring example of the Islamic philosophy of global peace and coexistence. *Dr. Zubair Zafar Khan* walks down this most important chapter of mutual human existence to describe how the three monotheistic faiths of the world: Islam, Christianity and Judaism lived in peace and drank from the same fountain of knowledge and prosperity.

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Muzaffar Chandra discusses the importance of religion and culture in the age of globalization. Since religion and culture hold some positive aspects it is important that it is not completely rejected. Ethics and moral standards should be injected into some economic activities as a short-term and medium-term strategy. The market should be regulated by ethical principles.

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Al-Andalus: The Golden Age of Co-Existence

Zubair Zafar Khan

By CE700, the Visigothic kingdom in Spain was in decline. And, with Toledo – the main city – being ravished by famine, diseases and internal disputes, Spain paved way for the Muslims to establish a peaceful Islamic state. By 711, the Arabs and Berbers had converted to Islam, which was dominating the northern Africa. It was at this time when Tariq ibn-Ziyad with an army of 10,000 soldiers crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and defeated the Visigothic army of King Roderic at the Battle of Guadalete. The king is thought to have drowned while trying to escape.

Within the next seven years, the Muslims controlled most of the peninsula and ruled for the next 400 years; some parts for 700 years. They left a lasting legacy, but the Muslims were not the occupiers of Spain. Washington Irving wrote in his *Tales of the Alhambra,* "they were... not invaders and usurpers but re-discoverers of the Greek reservoir of knowledge and helped plant the roots of the European Renaissance."

During the end of the first millennium, Cordova was the intellectual fountain from which European humanity came to drink. Students from France and England traveled there to sit at the feet of Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars to learn philosophy, science and medicine.1 In the great library of Cordova alone, there were some 600,000 manuscripts. The famous historian, James Burke, wrote, "At a time when London was a tiny mud-hut village that could not boast of a single street lamp, in Cordoba there were half a million inhabitants, living in 113,000 houses. There were 700 mosques and 300 public baths spread throughout the city. The streets were paved and lit. The houses had marble balconies for summer and hot-air ducts under the mosaic floors for winter. They were adorned with gardens with artificial fountains and orchards. Paper, a material still unknown to the West, was everywhere. There were bookshops and more than seventy libraries." [2]

Al-Andalus is described as a 'Golden Age' of religious and ethnic liberty and interfaith harmony between Muslims, Christians and Jews.

Social structure

Religiously, the society of Al-Andalus was made up of three main elements: Christians, Muslims and Jews. The most striking feature of the society of Al-Andalus was its religious tolerance in the society. Though Muslims were dominant and rulers, but people of other faiths enjoyed equal liberty with Muslims. This was the crucial factor of the rapid advancement of Spanish society in that era. All inhabitants were treated equal. During this period the term *La Convivencia* (the Coexistence) was introduced. *La Convivencia* is a term used to describe a situation in Spanish history from the Muslim Umayyad conquest of Hispania in 711 to 1492, when Jews, Muslims and Christians lived peacefully together in Islamic state of Al-Andalus.[3]

Many European scholars admitted that, Christians and Jews were treated friendly by Muslims. The famous Orientalist, Prof. Montgomery Watt, confesses, "It is a common misapprehension that the holy war meant that the Muslims gave their opponents a choice 'between Islam and the sword'. This was sometimes the case, but only when the opponents were polytheist or idol-worshippers. For Jews, Christians, and other 'People of the Book', there was a third possibility, they might become a 'protected group', by paying Jizya to the State and to enjoy internal autonomy".[4]

Dr Burke states, at that time tolerance was unheard of in the rest of Europe, but in Al-Andalus, thousands of Jews and Christians lived in peace and harmony with their Muslim neighbors". Economically, their prosperity was unparalleled for centuries. The aristocracy promoted private land ownership and encouraged Jews in banking. There was little or no Muslim prostelyting.[5] Another Orientalist, Claugh says, "The society had become too sophisticated to be fanatical. Christians and Moslems, with Jews as their intermediaries and interpreters, lived side by side and fought, not each other, but other enemies".6 The Muslims did not hate or persecute the non-Muslims. As Bernard Lewis puts it in contrast to Christian anti-Semitism, the Muslim attitude toward non-Muslims is one not of hate or fear or envy.[7]

Many Western intellectuals have their Muslim teachers, they learned under them and even they enjoyed high rank jobs in Al-Andalus. The well-known early 12th century Englishman, Adelard of Bath, often proudly acknowledged his debt to the Arabs, "trained by Arab scientists. I was taught by my Arab masters to be led only by reason, whereas you were taught to follow the halter of the captured image of ancient authority (authority of the Church)".[8]

Maria Rosa Menocal, a specialist in Iberian literature, has argued that "tolerance was an inherent

aspect of Andalusian society". In her view, the Jews and Christians living under the Caliphate were much better off than in other parts of Christian Europe.

Jews and Christians did retain freedom under Muslim rule, provided they obeyed certain rules. Although these rules would now be considered completely unacceptable, they were not much of a burden by the standards of the time, and in many ways the non-Muslims of Al-Andalus (at least before 1050) were treated better than conquered peoples might have expected during that period of history.[9]

For instance, Jews and Christians were not forced to live in ghettoes or other special locations; they were not enslaved; they were not prevented from following their own faith; they were not forced to convert or die under Muslim rule; they were not banned from any particular ways of earning a living; they often took on jobs shunned by Muslims; they can opt any job such as banking and dealing in gold and silver; they could work in the civil service of the Islamic rulers; Jews and Christians were able to contribute to society and culture in any manner.

Liberal behavior with Mozarabs

The Christians in Al-Andalus assimilated parts of the Muslim culture. They learned Arabic, adopted the same clothes as Muslims (Christian women even started wearing the veil), and some took Arabic names. Christians who did this were known as Mozarabs. Basically the Mozarabs (in Spanish: mozrabes; in Portuguese: mocarabes; from Arabic: musta'rib",, "arabicized") were Iberian Christians, who lived under Muslim rule in Al-Andalus. Their descendants remained unconverted to Islam, but did however adopt elements of Arabic language and culture.[10]

Most of the Mozarabs were descendants of the ancient Romano-Gothic Christians who became Arabic speakers under Islamic rule. Many were also what the Arabist Mikel de Epalza calls "Neo-Mozarabs", that is Northern Europeans who had come to the Spanish frontier and picked up Arabic, thereby entering the Mozarabic community. Some were Arab and Berber Christians coupled with Muslim converts who were emerged as Arabic speakers naturally were at home among the original Mozarabs. A prominent example of Muslims who became Mozarabs by embracing Christianity is the Andalsuian rebel and Anti-Umayyad military leader, Umar ibn Hafsun. Some Mozarabs were even Converso Jews who likewise became part of the Mozarabic milieu. The Courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, one of the grandest architectural legacies of the Umayyads. ... Converso (Spanish and Portuguese for a convert, from Latin conversus, converted, turned around) and its feminine form conversa referred to Jews or Muslims or the descendants of Jews or Muslims who had converted to Catholicism in Spain and Portugal, particularly during the 1300s and 1400s. ... Separate Mozarab enclaves were located in the large Muslim cities, especially Toledo, Cordoba, Zaragoza, and Seville etc.

Officially, Mozarabs were regarded by the Muslims as Dhimmi (the people under protection), adults paying a "Jizya" tax, equal to one dinar per year with exemptions for old people, women, children and the disables. In addition, Mozarabs allowed to be judged by their own judges, under their own law and had their own tribunals and authorities. For instance, during the first centuries of Muslim rule, the Mozarab community of Lleida was apparently ruled by a *Qumis* (count) and had its own judiciary, but there is no evidence of any such administration in the later period.[11] The counts were directly responsible to the Muslim emir or caliph. They were allowed to maintain their hierarchy (the primate of Al-Andalus being the archbishop of Toledo), and they used the Visigothic, not the Muslim, canon law. Their liturgy, called the Mozarabic rite, was like that of ancient Gaul. It is preserved only in chapels at Toledo and Salamanca.[12] They also maintained their own bishoprics, churches, and monasteries and translated the Bible into Arabic. Some of the Mozarabs even held high offices in the Islamic administration. A prominent example being that of Rabi ibn Zayd, a palace official, who wrote the famous Calendar of Cordoba for Abd ar-Rahman III, undertook various diplomatic missions in Germania and Byzantium and was rewarded

with the Bishopric of Elvira (present Granada). In 1064, Emir Al-Muqtadir of Zaragoza sent Paternus, the Mozarabic bishop of Tortosa, as an envoy, to king Ferdinand I of Leon in Santiago de Compostela, while the Christian Abu Umar ibn Gundislavus, a Saqaliba (a Slav), served the same Taifa ruler as the Wazir (Vizier, or the equivalent to prime minister).[13]

Even during these tolerant periods some incidents of violence occurred in Al-Andalus. For example, 48 Christians of Cordoba were decapitated for religious offences against Islam. They became known as the Martyrs of Cordoba. These deaths played out, not in a single spasm of religious unrest, but over an extended period of time.[14]

There is a little evidence of a limited cultural borrowing from the Mozarabs by the Muslim community in Al-Andalus. For instance, the Muslims adoption of the Christian solar calendar and holidays was an exclusively Andalusi phenomenon. In Al-Andalus, the Islamic lunar calendar was supplemented by the local solar calendar, which was more useful for agricultural and navigational purposes. Muslims also celebrated traditional Christian holidays sometimes with the sponsorship of their leaders, despite the fact that such fraternization was generally opposed by the Ulema. The Muslims also hedged their metaphysical bets through the use of Roman Catholic sacraments.

In the earliest period of Muslim domination of Iberia, there is evidence of extensive interaction between the two communities attested to by shared cemeteries and churches, bilingual coinage, and the continuity of late Roman pottery types. Besides, in the peninsula the conquerors did not settle in the *Amsar*,**15** (the self contained and deliberately isolated city camps set up alongside existing settlements elsewhere in the Muslim world with the intention of protecting Arab settlers from corrupting indigenous influences).

The Arab and mostly Berber immigrants who settled in the existing towns were drawn into broad contact with natives. Their immigration, though limited in numbers, introduced new agricultural and hydraulic technologies, new craft industries, and Levantine techniques of shipbuilding. They were accompanied by an Arabic-language culture that brought with it the higher learning and science of the classical and post-classical Levantine world. The Emir of Cordoba, Abd ar-Rahman-I's policy of allowing the ethnic Arab politico-military elite to practice agriculture further encouraged economic and cultural contact and cohesion. Moreover, the interaction of foreign and native elements, fostered by intermarriage and contact in day-to-day commercial and social life rapidly stimulated acculturation and drew many Iberian Christians towards Islam.

The heterodox features of Mozarabic culture inevitably became more prominent. However, Christian women often married Muslim men and their children were raised as Muslims. Even within Mozarab families, legal divorce eventually came to be practiced along Islamic lines. Ordination of the clergy ultimately drifted far from canonical norms, breaking Apostolic Succession, and various Muslim sources claim that concubinage and fornication among the clergy was extremely widespread.

Many Mozarabs converted to Islam willingly. In the 10th century a massive conversion of Christians took place, which was called as Muladies (Muslims of ethnic Iberian origin) comprised the majority of the population of Al-Andalus by the century's end.[16]

Conversion to Islam also opened up new horizons to the Mozarabs, alleviated their social position, ensured better living conditions, and broadened scope for more technically skilled and advanced work.

Religio-cultural conditions of Jews before Muslims in Iberia

Long before the Muslim rule, all the Spanish Christians, regardless of their sect, were unified in their intolerance of Jews. Many laws were passed restricting Jews. Although they were not always followed or enforced, but new anti-Jewish laws made annually.

Every Visigoth king decided to stamp out Judaism; this period was a reign of terror for the

Jews of Spain. However, there was one mitigating factor. The Visigoths fought among themselves over positions of power with great frequency. When one got power, he would banish or kill his predecessor's friends and followers. This often distracted them from their persecution of the Jews. The first of many discriminatory laws against the Jews was passed even before the Moorish invasion in CE305 in the Roman province of Hispania (Spain); soon after the Council of Toledo passed a canon forbidding Jews from blessing the crops of non-Jews, as well as prohibited Christians from sharing meals with Jews.

When the Visigoths (Aryan Christians) invaded Hispania in CE409, more laws were instituted further restricting the Jews. In CE589, Visigoth King Recared relinquished the Aryan sect and accepted the orthodox Catholic faith, thereby paving the way for the religious unity in the country. Subsequently, the Church was to exert powerful influence on all aspects of social life. Almost immediately a canon law was passed forbidding the marriage between Christian and Jews; and in CE612, the Council of Gundemar of Toledo ordered that all Jews submit to baptism within the year, or undergo "scourging, mutilation, banishment, and confiscation of goods".**17** However, the years of late Aryan and early orthodox Christian rule were both coming to a close. In CE709, internal unrest destabilized the peninsula. This strife originated between the Trinitarian Christians--who accepted the Trinity, and Aryan Christians, who saw Jesus not as their god but as a prophet inspired by their god.[18]

In CE616, King Sisebut declared that any Jew refusing baptism should get 100 lashes; if they still refused to convert, they were banished and all their property confiscated. By the end of the year, 90,000 Jews, thought to be a small percentage of all those in Spain, had accepted baptism, although many continued to live as secret Jews. During this time, some Jews left Spain for North Africa, while many just continued to live as they had.

In 680, King Erwig proclaimed "Judaeorum pestis", "a plague of Jews", and called for their extermination. His decree, however, was not successful, although it caused great hardship to many Jews. In 681, another decree proclaimed, this one saying that all Jews had to become Christians or leave the country.

In 694, understandably, after this sort of treatment, the Jews of Spain attempted to revolt. They formed an alliance with Jews in North Africa, many of whom had fled Jerusalem centuries before, then fled from the Visigoths and managed to convert some Berbers. The revolt, however, was betrayed by informers. Because of this, Jews were no longer just considered a religious affront, but also a political danger. It was then decreed that all Jewish sons at the age of seven should be given to Christians as slaves and raised as Catholics. Fortunately, outside of Toledo this did not have much effect, since the Visigoth nobles were too busy fighting each other.[19]

Liberal behavior with Jews

Therefore, the Muslim conquest of Iberia was a welcome event for the suppressed Jewish population. An era of peaceful coexistence ushered in the Muslim rule. The tolerant attitude of the Muslim rulers led the Jews preserve their rites and traditions and boosted their economy. They were *dhimmis* (non-Muslims living in a land governed by Muslims), but had full autonomy and rights to practice their religion, as well as full protection by their Muslim rulers. This peaceful atmosphere drew Jews from other parts of the world mainly from Europe to migrate to Al-Andalus where they were treated with dignity. Jews constituted more than 5 percent population of Al-Andalus.

Al-Andalus became a key center of Jewish life during the early Middle Ages, producing important scholars and one of the most stable and wealthy Jewish communities. This is because Jews were treated better in Muslim-controlled Iberia than in Christian Europe. This period of interfaith-harmony is termed as "golden age" of tolerance, respect and harmony.[20]

After the decline of the previous center of Jewish thought in Babylonia, Al-Andalus became the center of Jewish intellectual endeavors. Especially during the reign of Abd-ar-Rahman III and his son,

Al-Hakam II, the Jews of Al-Andalus prospered, devoting themselves to the service of the Caliphate of Cordoba, to the study of the sciences, and to commerce and industry, especially to trading in silk and slaves, in this way promoting the prosperity of the country. Southern Iberia became an asylum for the oppressed Jews of other countries[21] Abd al-Rahman's court physician and minister was Hasdai ben Isaac ibn Shaprut, the patron of Menahem ben Saruq, Dunash ben Labrat, and other Jewish scholars and poets. Jewish thought during this period flourished under famous figures such as Samuel Ha-Nagid, Moses ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol Judah Halevi and Moses Maimonides.[22] During Abd al-Rahman's term of power, the scholar Moses ben Enoch was appointed rabbi of Cordoba, and as a consequence Al-Andalus became the center of Talmudic study, and Cordoba the meeting-place of Jewish savants. Here we are discussing some prominent figures of Jewish intellectuals which were flourished in Al-Andalus. Among them, Abu al-Fadl ibn Hasda, philosopher, vizier at Zaragosa, Abu Ruiz ibn Dahri fought in the war against the Almohades, Amram ben Isaac ibn Shalbib, scholar and diplomat in the service of Alfonso VI of Castile, Bahya ibn Paquda, philosopher and author of *Chovot ha-Levavot,* Bishop Bodo-Eleazar; according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia,* "a convert to Judaism who went to Cordoba, where he is said to have endeavored to win proselytes for Judaism from among the Spanish Christians", Dunash ben Labrat (920-990), poet, Isaac ibn Albalia, astronomer and Rabbi at Granada, Jekuthiel ibn Hasan, king's minister at Zaragosa, fell from favor, executed, Joseph ibn Hasdai, poet, father of Abu al-Fadl ibn Hasdai, Joseph ibn Migash, diplomat for Granada, Maimonides, rabbi, physician, and philosopher, Menahem ben Saruk, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, poet and philosopher, Moses ben Enoch Yehuda Halevi, poet and philosopher, Abraham ibn Ezra, rabbi and poet, Moses ibn Ezra, philosopher and poet, Benjamin of Tudela, traveler and explorer, Samuel Ha-Nagid ibn Nagrela, king's minister and poet, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, royal physician and statesman and Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon etc.

Poets and commentators like Judah Halevi (1086-1145) and Dunash ben Labrat (920-990) contributed to the cultural life of Al-Andalus, but the area was even more important to the development of Jewish philosophy.

A stream of Jewish philosophers, cross-fertilizing with Muslim philosophers, culminated in a widely celebrated Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages. The Jews worked mainly as tax collectors, traders, doctors and ambassadors etc. At the end of the 15th century there were about 50,000 Jews in Granada and roughly 100,000 in the whole of Islamic Iberia.**23**

The Jews, who had been virtually eliminated from the peninsula in the seventh century by the Christians, grew once more in numbers and flourished. Hume wrote, "Side by side with the new rulers lived the Christians and Jews in peace. The latter rich with commerce and industry were content to let the memory of their oppression by the priest-ridden Goths sleep".**24**

Golden Age of Jewish Culture in Al-Andalus

From the second half of the 8th century to the end of the 11th century Jewish life flourished while contributing greatly to scholarship. A translating program was established in Toledo, using Jews as interpreters. They translated the Arabic books into romance languages, as well as Greek and Hebrew texts into Arabic. This included many major works of Greek science and philosophy. Jews studied and contributed to mathematics, medicine, botany, geography, poetry, and philosophy.25 It was at this time that the study of Medicine expanded to produce a large number of exceptional Jewish physicians. Islam had its sway over Jewish cultural life too. In literature, and the arts, the Muslim influence on the Jews is enormous. Though written in non-Islamic language and script, medieval Hebrew poetry, and much of the prose literature, belong to the same cultural world as Arabic and other literatures of Islam.**26**

In the Caliphate of Cordoba [the geographical zenith of Islamic life in Al-Andalus], the Jewish element became increasingly important, reaching its peak in the tenth century.**27** Jews lived among

themselves in a walled area known as the Aljama (Jewish quarter). There they lived among their own administration, and managed their own communal affairs.[28]

The Jewish community had their own legal court known as the Beit Din. In which they were allowed to settle their own disputes. This court, with Rabbis as Judges, would render both religious and civil legal opinions pertaining to Jewish affairs inside the Aljama. The influence Islamic culture injected into Jewish life was significant. Jews accepted many customs and traditions of the Muslims and interweaved them into their daily life. The Arabic language, instead of Spanish and Hebrew, was used for prayers. Ceremoniously washing of the hands and feet, which is an Islamic custom, became adopted by Jews before entering Synagogues. Moreover, Jewish music was sung to the tune of old Arabic melodies. Jews adopted the clothing style of Muslims; Most wore the universal long robe and belt like Muslims.

For almost 400 years, the Jews lived in Al-Andalus amid the moderate Islamic rule based in Cordoba. This period termed as Golden Age. A story was told in al-Andalus during this golden age: When Allah was furnishing the empty shell of the world, Al-Andalus petitioned for five blessings: Clear skies, a beautiful sea bountifully stocked with fish, trees hung with fruit, fair women, and a just government. Allah granted all but the last wish, reasoning that if all the others were given a proper government, Al-Andalus might rival Paradise.[29]

The Islamic rule later cleaved up into numerous small Muslim kingdoms, each with its own ruler. They started fighting among each other. Once the Muslims divided, the armies of Christendom gained a foothold on the peninsula. It was this subsequent warring of Islamic administrations that led to collapse of Muslim supremacy on the peninsula, allowing the Christians to rise to power during the subsequent reconquista. When the caliphate disintegrated in the 11th century, many influential Jews remained in the Muslim States.[30]

The Jews perpetuated their way of life under the subsequent Christian monarchs of Spain, until anti-Semitism caught up with them, and they were expelled three hundred years later. For hundreds of years, Jews lived in peace with Muslim neighbors and rulers in Al-Andalus while they were exiled by many other European countries many times.

Conclusion

The history of Al-Andalus is a bright chapter of Islamic history, regarding not only to intellectual progress but also for the liberal nature of its society. As we have discussed above that all the three communities (Muslims, Christians and Jews) in Al-Andalus, were living with complete harmony with each other. The crucial factor which was behind this tolerance is the Islamic teachings of tolerance to others. That is La Ikraha Fiddin (there is no compulsion in religion).[31]

It is the basic principle which controls Muslims to behave with others tolerantly and not to compel anyone regarding religion. It is most Important characteristic of Islam that not a single event is found when Muslims behave arrogantly with others or to denounce other's religion or religious personalities. For example, there is not a single incident when a Muslim found denouncing Jesus Christ, Moses, Buddha, Rama and Krishna etc. Whereas there are many Incidents when Christian, Jews, Hindu and even deviated Muslims denounce and blame Prophet Muhammad or other Islamic entities. Recently the Newspaper of Denmark published the Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad which causes many inter-faith conflicts around the world.

This tolerant behavior is not confined only to words but practically the behavior of Muslims with others in Muslim ruled land is liberal and secular and Non-Muslims were living peacefully under Muslim rule and there is no or very little interfaith conflicts occur in these countries like, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries etc. While there are a lot of interfaith conflicts occurred against Muslims in Non-Muslim ruled states like, India, Israel, Thailand, Kosovo, Chechnya etc.

Above all the most striking evidence of Islamic tolerant behavior to other religion is that there is not a single incident occurred in Islamic history as Holocaust, Inquisition and dropping atom bombs

on Japan and attempts of genocide in Kosovo and Israel, which were horrific examples of intolerant behavior of one against other religions.

Islam therefore is the only solution for the development of a modern pluralistic society, which is a great requisite of the modern age to ensure peace inthe world.

(The author is a research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. He can be contacted at: drzubairzafar@gmail.com)

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